3i Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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In some areas, as in the sadar sub-division of Mayurbhanj, there is an interesting variation in the custom requiring both the complainant and accused to pay jointly for the feast of the judges, in the proportion of ten annas for the accused and six annas for the complainant in the rupee. Generally the "pañc" themselves eat the dinner; the public take no part in it. The contending parties then depart after a cordial mutual *johar* (salutation). In frivolous cases, the complainant has got to pay a fine himself. So we see that the Headman is not the sole repository of law in the eye of tribal jurisprudence to settle disputes; he must consult the "*Mònṣèn hòṛ*" to arrive at a decision.

The Headman with the assembly decides all matters of a socio-religious, legal and quasi-legal nature of the village. They are the fountain-heads of justice and custodians of Santal customs and manners, the first court of law both civil and criminal, for the Santal is generally averse to litigation in legally constituted courts, and prefers the arbitration of his village-elders.

To go into details, the Headman with his assembly will raise subscriptions for the public festivals like the December Harvest-Home, for religious feasts, and for offering libations to the deities of serious epidemics affecting the tribe. In all cases of marriage and funerals, the Headman and his advisory body must attend. Such ceremonies without them are unthinkable to the Santal.

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that it is celebrated with the reaping of moist-land rice, and where there is no such corn to be harvested, there is no function. The date of this public ceremony is fixed in *Agrahayan* (Nov.—Dec.) by the "Móṇṛèn hòṛ" (the tribal assembly), when the village-priest procures a winnowing fan, vermilion, new earthen-pots and *mithi* (a kind of spice).

The Mayurbhanj festival, observed for two days, has *Um Naṛka* (the day of purification) as the first item. Early in the morning, the unmarried boys of the tribe repair and clean the small hut for Jahèr era at the Holy Grove (Jahèrthan), after fasting for a day. Towards evening, the villagers assemble at the house of the *Naeke* (village-priest) and old men and women invoke Maraṅ Buru, Jahèr era, Mòṇṛènko, Maraṅ Mañjhi Haṛam and Hudiñ Mañjhi Haṛam with proper songs. To ensure the presence of the deities, a dance is arranged at the Holy Grove; and if it is not possible, five men, being the number of the gods, rub a plantain with sun-dried rice when they are sure to respond to the tribal prayer. Next they sit on a mat. The priest gives them sun-dried rice which they rub in the winnowing fan. They now show signs of frenzy (*Ibupar*). They are asked their names by the priest and in a trance they name the five gods, one after another. Then the actor-deities are invoked and questioned so that the tribe may reap paddy in plenty, and how the

3t Mukherjea O. Y-4,8 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
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SANTAL PARGANAS

The customary practices, in connection with the *Pata*, vary in different areas. There are some in the Santal Parganas who show signs of supposed spirit-possession (the Santal *jhupar*) with the arrival of the festival. They go here and there like Tagore's maniac (*'khepa'*) in eternal search for the "touch-stone." They dive in a pond, ransack the forests, search the hills, and at last coming upon a stone shout, "Eureka" ("We have found."). And the admiring audience see that they have unearthed a stone, which they all acclaim as the symbol of *Mahadeo*. These people, called *Bhòktas*, then run to the conveners of the Hindu festival *Còròk* and prevail upon them to worship the images ceremonially, and if listened to, they are permitted to join with the devotees and take part in the ceremonials.

There are others who arrange their own festivals. Such people go begging from house to house for three days previous, and with the proceeds, they buy milk. Then on the eve of the *Pata*, they assemble at a field, where the *Bhòktas* (devotees) erect a hut-temple with subscriptions collected from the tribe; and offer milk, rice and *ghee* to the deity *Mahadeo* with a good deal of ceremony, a goat being sacrificed in a place away from the improvised temple. The ceremonials conclude with special songs and dances in which the Santals take part *with a great deal of gusto.*

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jaher rather than as the *Maṇjhi than*. Until recently the shrine had been in another place beyond the present limits of the dwellings, and the villagers had found such a site very inconvenient. They were encouraged to change the site by the fact that in the street there grew an *arjun* tree, one of the sacred trees of Hinduism, and they felt they should do something to signalize its presence in the village. On a cleared space at the base of the tree there were two miniature wooden seats which were used by the spirits when they came, and there were also a clay horse and an elephant which had been in position there since the establishment of the shrine. The duty of tending these shrines, of sweeping the floor and plastering it with cowdung, falls upon an unmarried girl from the headman's house. The headman officiates as the priest at this shrine, presenting the offerings to his ancestors as the representative not only of the family but also of the living members of the village community. Offerings are made during the *Mokor*, the festival that closes the month of *Pus* in mid-January, and also during the Spring and Harvest festival seasons. Animals are sacrificed, but there is a significant difference in the methods of killing the animals offered in the sacred grove to the tribal spirits and those offered to the spirits of the ancestors. In the case of the former the animal is beheaded, but in the latter the animal is struck by a heavy implement on the back of the head so that the blood is not poured out. It does not seem possible to obtain any explanation of this from a Santal, apart from the all-embracing statement that "it is the custom". There is here another indication of the complexity of Santal religion; it would be difficult to fit all the facts into a scheme that seeks to find the origin of sacrifice in a single or simple cause.

The spirit world is not only the concern of the whole community or of each village but also of each family, a fact that finds embodiment in the cult surrounding the third sacred place of the Santals. This is a sacred enclosure inside each dwelling-house known as the *bhitar*, an Indo-Aryan word that means "within". This is formed by constructing a wall across the breadth of the main dwelling-house and so dividing the interior into two rooms with a mud partition between. The *bhitar* is the smaller of the two. The wall may be carried as high as the average height of a man, but often it is only about four feet high. The opening through which members of the family may pass from one room to the other is left vacant without a door. There are no sacred emblems kept in the *bhitar*,

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tion without losing sight of their main objective, the presentation of the Christian Gospel. One of their missionaries wrote in 1865: "We have by no means lost sight of the all-important fact that secular education without heart culture is of very little consequence. Hence, we have ever made the spiritual instruction of the people as prominent as possible. . . ."[1]

The main missionary effort developed in the north after the tragic rebellion of Santals had directed public attention to their affairs. The Santal Mission of the Northern Churches published its Seventy-Fifth Annual Report in 1941 and reported a total community of over 25,000 Christians. This mission, with supporting committees in Norway, Denmark and America, grew out of the pioneer work of a remarkable Norwegian, Lars Olsen Skrefsrud, and his Danish companions, Mr. and Mrs. Boerresen. Resigning from the Gossner Lutheran Mission, they began work independently and established a mission station at Benagaria in 1867. Skrefsrud, who was in every sense a giant of a man, prepared an *Introduction to the Grammar of the Santali Language*, [127] which was published in 1873. It is to his enthusiasm and interest that we owe the account of the Santal traditions published in Santali in 1887. His linguistic work was carried forward and developed by the great scholar P. O. Bodding. To their efforts more than to any other cause the Santals owe the fact [212] that Santali has developed a literature. The first efforts of the missionaries were aimed at providing the scriptures, song books and reading primers, for which purpose the Roman script was adapted, but a great stimulus to the study by the Santals of their own institutions was provided by the publication of the traditions.[2] This mission also publishes the only Santali peri- [264] odical, which is now in its twenty-sixth year. Other societies that have made notable contributions to missionary work in the Santal Parganas and neighbouring areas are the Church Missionary Society and the Church of Scotland, the latter being particularly noted for the excellent service of medical mission- 797 aries at Bamdah. The Santal members of the different Church • 794 bodies are brought together in the meetings of the Santal Christian Council, a body that was established in 1934 and is the only organization of any kind that brings together Santals

[113] [1] Stacy, *Life of Otis Robinson Backeler*, p. 318, quoted from *Primary Education among Santals of Midnapore, 1931. A Survey with Proposals*, by Lewis Clayton Kitchen, Calcutta.

[2] *Mare Hapramko reak' Katha*, Dumka (1st ed., 1887). An English translation by P. O. Bodding was published in Oslo in 1942, entitled *Traditions and Institutions of the Santals*.

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from different provinces in India for mutual consultation. Through the influence exercised by its members in their several localities it has done not a little to heighten the community consciousness of the Santals in many places.

One of the constituent bodies of the Santal Christian Council has been at work among the Santals of the Bankura district for about sixty years. Before that date the American missionaries based on Midnapore made long tours which included the south-western areas of the Bankura district, but they would seem to have had little effect on the lives of the people. After the Methodist mission was established in the headquarters town of the Bankura district, the Americans withdrew and missionaries from Bankura began to tour the same area. Little progress was made until after the mission stationed its first missionary at Sarenga in the year 1888, though the first Santal converts were baptized near the town of Bishnupur. The missions established among the Santals are all evangelistic in intention. Their agents not only proclaim the Gospel, but they do so in the hope that non-Christians will accept the Christian Faith in Baptism and enter into the membership of the Christian Church. In the Bankura district the number of Santals who have responded to the preaching in this manner is not much more than a thousand. Although progress has been relatively more rapid in some areas than in others, it remains true everywhere that only a small proportion of the Santals has entered the Christian Church; on the other hand, in comparison with the non-Christian communities who are their immediate neighbours, the Santals have proved responsive. By describing here some aspects of the work in the Bankura district with which I have been intimately associated I do not wish to convey the impression that what is true for one area is true for all. In fact, it is impossible that such should be the case. Many factors make for differences. The Christian Church among the Santals is of greater age and maturity in some places than in others; in some areas work has been concentrated almost exclusively with Santals in view, whereas elsewhere it has formed one among many activities of the mission in question. The various traditions from which the missionaries, and in particular the pioneer missionaries sprang, made for differences in emphasis and attitude towards Santal institutions and culture. Nevertheless, it is my belief that the description of a local situation in the context of the Santal culture of the area may help to throw some light on the general problem of missionary work among the Santals.

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CHAPTER 14

THE NEW COMMUNITY

The Santal Christian community is more than an aggregate of individuals who have broken off from the tribe or have been born of parents who did so. It possesses a social life of its own; the individuals and families who compose it have opened their lives to a new influence and with it to a system of ideas that is capable of establishing a pattern of social behaviour distinct from the old. The new pattern will not be different in every respect from the old, which has much of value to contribute and which still exercises a powerful influence in certain directions. By examining the main trends in the present life of one particular community we may not be able to forecast what the pattern will be when Santals in far greater numbers have entered the Church, but we should be able to see the outlines of development in the years immediately ahead.

The great majority of the Santal Christians in the area have retained their status as villagers and cultivators. Their economic interests and activities are the same as those of their non-Christian neighbours. They toil for their daily bread and have to rely on the same aptitudes, skill and intelligent foresight and they earn respect according to the degree in which they display them. They maintain the traditional division of labour between men and women. The men plough the fields and repair their houses; they cut the trees of the forest and cart timber to the railway station. As the long lines of bullock carts enveloped in a cloud of red dust bump over the country roads, one finds here and there in the line a Christian man urging on his pair of bullocks. In bad years when a crowd of men are thronging round the office of the local police station to receive their cultivation loans from the government the Christians take their turn with the rest. The women do the work of the house and take the customary share in the cultivation of the fields and in the food-gathering activities of the village women. The men play their part in the annual hunts and the heads of the household sit with the rest of the villagers in the councils of the village and the tribe.

In spite of the common interests and activities which bind the villagers together irrespective of religious allegiance, the Santal Christian is immediately aware of certain tensions which issue progressively in a breaking away from the old way of life.

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The most important cause of tension is the acceptance of a theology—a new myth, as it may be called—that results in a new ordering of religious activities and social obligations. The shadowy figure of the Supreme Being is invested with personality and comes into the centre of consciousness. He is not merely the Creator to whom little is ascribed except a vague reference as the dispenser of good and bad weather; He is vitally concerned with human conduct. The stories of Genesis are grafted on to conceptions that are already held and affect the latter. The story of the Jews is appreciated as that of a people who suffered through a long history from oppression, and the story of the wanderings appeals to the Santal. It is altogether fitting that the One Saviour of all mankind should be born of a people with whom the Santal feels that he has much in common. The traditional story of the origin of mankind is held to supplement the biblical narrative. In preaching, the Santal constantly refers to Adam and Eve as *Pilcu Haṛam* and *Pilcu Buḍhi*; *Maraṅ Buru*, on the other hand, is equated with Satan, and the cult of worship that he instituted is regarded as a deception imposed on the Santals. To the Santal who has been led in any degree to appreciate the Christian teaching about God, the identification of *Maraṅ Buru* with Satan seems to be obvious. He led the first human pair into sin and revealed to them the secret of sexual intercourse, for which the polite name among the Santals is always *haṛiᶜ kami*, or evil work. He caused their ancestors to wander through the forests and finally foisted on them the cult of the spirits centring in the worship of himself. It follows that there are certain things which a Christian may not do. They are cut off from any activity that savours of worship of the tribal spirits. They do not contribute in cash or in kind to the offerings associated with the village festivals. This in turn excludes them from the communal rejoicing, the dancing and the feasting which take place during the festivals. At such times they are frequently the only sober persons in the village. It is impossible to live in a village at the time of the great Spring and Harvest festivals without becoming acutely aware of the gulf which divides the Christians from their neighbours, and without realizing that the Christians are themselves deeply conscious of the gulf. The same is true of the clan sacrifices; but it is interesting to observe that rules of behaviour which are linked with the mythology of the clans still regulate the conduct of the village Christian to a very large extent. A Murmu who has a clan taboo against building a house with four sloping sides to the roof continues to live in the style of house

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enjoined by custom. Food taboos and those relating to dress and ornament are respected and the rules governing clan exogamy are accepted without question. The reason underlying these facts is probably that even when the myth has been discredited the code of behaviour is charged with emotions that continue to enforce it as long as the village environment has been little affected.

In their attitude to the ancestor cult many of the Christians have evolved a compromise. Some families known to me started their Christian life on the basis of a bargain with the spirits. In one village in particular where there are now eight Christian households in a community of twenty-eight families, at least three of the original families to be converted left one of the brothers outside the Church. The unbaptized members of these families were charged with the responsibility of maintaining the fellowship of the family with their ancestors. As one of those concerned said: "If the offerings had not been continued, then the ancestors might have shown their displeasure at all the children becoming Christian." Others who have become Christians continue to make offerings. In no case have I ever been able to discover evidence that Christians make any animal offerings, but during the festival which takes place at the end of the month of *Pus* many Christians make the cakes that are traditionally associated with the festival and make offerings of them to their immediate forbears. The family, represented by the living and the dead, continues to be a focus of powerful sentiments, and the Christians are evidently aware of a void in the teaching that they have received in regard to it.

The identification of *Marak Burn* with Satan incidentally provides a mythological foundation for propaganda in favour of total abstinence, for it was he who taught the first parents to brew beer. It is difficult to estimate the extent to which such propaganda has had the desired effect among the Christian community. Some of its members are known and respected as total abstainers, a fact that illustrates the introduction of a changed standard of values. On the other hand, the majority of village Christians certainly drink beer. The attitude of the community towards the older people who indulge is tolerant, and the habit is explained largely by the fact that the provision of beer is important in showing hospitality towards visitors. Drunkenness, however, is not condoned and it is certainly no longer a form of communal rejoicing. Drinking to excess, where it occurs, has become a private habit surrounded with secrecy.

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TRIBAL HERITAGE

794 177 178 158 The second main factor in producing tension is that the Christian becomes a member of a community that is different from the tribal community into which he was born and different from any other within his experience. He may know of one or two Santals who have been influenced by the Bengal form of Vaishnavism and have adopted some strange customs in consequence, and he is familiar with the semi-secret society formed by the *ojha* and his disciples, but neither of these provides any analogy with the society of which he now becomes a member. 794 797 177 178 152 The preaching of the Christian Faith has been pioneered by European missionaries, and up to the present the direction of the affairs of the Christian Church has remained in the hands of missionaries to a greater extent than in many other parts of India. Their apparent superiority tends to make the village Christian belittle his own ideas and institutions. Their superior wealth and beneficence tempt him to rely on their help, and sometimes produce resentment when the help is withheld for a reason which he is quite unable to appreciate, the desire to make him "independent". Furthermore, Santal Christians are linked through the Church with Christians who come from other communities. This fusion of diverse elements produces strain at times. 794 177 178 There has been no difficulty from the first in taking common meals, and this has safeguarded the witness of the [264] Sacrament of Holy Communion to the unity of believers in Christ. On the other hand, many Christians shrink from contact with the corpse of a non-Santal Christian. Near the village of Samadi there used to be one household of Christians who were of Bhuiya stock. I was on tour in the area when the [264] old grandmother died. She was buried in the Christian burial ground, here, as in most villages, a piece of waste-land within the holding of one of the Santal Christians, but none of the local Santal Christians would touch the corpse. The persistence of such ideas varies, one might say, in inverse proportion to the degree of contact which the local community enjoys with other Christians. Samadi is in a far corner of the area and such an incident would not occur nearer to the centre. This can be further illustrated by the fusion that has been 794 gradually taking place in the Christian community through 177 intermarriage. Although the village Christian abhors the thought 178 of intermarriage, a few individuals have ignored the rule of tribal 582 endogamy and have contracted marriages against which there are no Christian sanctions. Those who have done so would not find it possible to continue to live in the village community, and

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they are usually men and women who are already divorced from village life. A Santal who has been educated to University standard and subsequently obtained government employment has already been almost completely detribalized. He has little contact with his kinsfolk after early childhood, and if he chooses to marry a non-Santal wife he is strong enough to ignore the sentiment of other Santals. He has to suffer the knowledge that the majority of the Santal Christians as well as the non-Christians are extremely critical of his action and no longer regard him as one of themselves. It also happens sometimes that boys and girls who have been away from home in the mission boarding schools either persuade their reluctant guardians to agree to mixed marriages or force the issue on the community by their own action. The opposition aroused by such marriages usually abates with the passage of time.

While it is convenient to regard education as the third of the factors producing tension in the life of the Christian community, it is in some senses the key to all the rest. To some extent it has been responsible for strains felt through the whole range of tribal life, and this will become increasingly evident in the future with the spread of education. The problems created in the life of the Christian community are the more acute because its members have been eager to grasp at the advantages that accrue from education. Boys and girls in Christian families are sent to the local village school without any question. Immediately they are brought in touch with a new world. In accordance with government regulations they begin to learn to read and write Bengali. Attempts that have been made to give to Santali a more prominent place in the curriculum are not popular, for it has no commercial value. After completing the course at the village school the majority of the children pass into the life of boarding schools at Sarenga, where they remain for an average period of four years. The majority of the teachers at these schools now are themselves Santals and products of the same community, but the type of life is far removed from that of the village, and Santal culture is at best an "extra". The main emphasis of the schooling, accepted by teachers, parents and boys alike, is that the latter should be fitted for higher education or industrial training. Two-thirds of the pupils are Santals, but their language is banished from the classrooms except for about two periods in the week. Prayers are conducted in Santali alternately with Bengali. Although they are encouraged to learn and practise

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their tribal dances, the activity takes on a self-conscious quality which is quite unable to stand up to the general assumption of the Bengali community that these dances are fit only for the uneducated and "simple" villager. The education of girls follows a somewhat different pattern. For many years the Christians were slow in taking advantage of facilities for girls' education and the numbers in the girls' school were comparatively small. To a former generation girls were destined to the life of village housewives, and the education provided was not only irrelevant but it positively endangered the success of their daughters in marriage. Many of the older generation and some of the younger express a preference for illiterate wives who need less clothes and become proficient in house and field work by living at home. In school the girls live a sheltered life. Although agricultural training is given both to boys and girls in school through the care of gardens and through work on the rice fields belonging to the mission, such activity is regarded as an extra and some parents have voiced the view that it is a form of exploitation! In recent years, however, a change has come over the general attitude towards girls' education owing to the growth of a small number of economically independent unmarried women whose earnings are valuable to their families and also to the rise of a demand for educated wives by a section of the men. The changing attitude was illustrated by the fact that when in 1937, as a result of a change in policy, the girls were housed in cottages constructed as nearly as possible on the lines of a Santal village, there was considerable opposition from the parents. They objected that the girls would have too much housework in addition to their studies.

A new class of Santal Christians has been created which sets the tone for changes in the community. The more intellectual members are lost to village life; they pass to High School or to other training and many of them retain only slender links with their village homes. They follow a wide range of occupations unknown to Santals of the older generation, in government service, as paid mission agents, and in recent years they have begun to enter the ranks of industrial workers in the city. Girls have become nurses and teachers. The local leaders of the Church are largely salaried members of the mission staff who are "compound" centred rather than village minded. Their small but regular wages have made them better off than the great majority of the peasants among whom they work; and one result is that the latter do not invariably follow the lead they are given.

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From time to time the local Church courts have to consider matters of discipline for moral offences. The only kind of "sanction" that is effective in such cases is a social and economic boycott of the offender by other members of the community. This type of boycott is familiar enough in village life, and the leaders in the Church courts do at times seek to impose it. They are frequently discouraged by the fact that the Christian villager declines to obey the resolution of the meeting in which he doubtless feels he should have a greater voice. The comparative impotence of the Christian community to deal with offenders does encourage moral laxity in certain individuals. The further inference that some offences are more common in one section of the community than in another, or among Christians than among non-Christians, does not follow. When village Christians are themselves faced with the necessity of taking disciplinary action they fall back on tribal practice as nearly as possible. On one occasion a Santal Christian man died at his home about seven miles from Sarenga and the local "catechist" came to ask me to conduct the funeral. This request was unusual, for in the normal way he would have conducted the funeral himself. The dead man, however, had left his home fourteen years before and had lived in the "east" with a non-Christian woman, for which reason his name had been struck off the rolls; so far as the local Christian community was concerned, they understood by this that he was to be to them "as a heathen and a publican". Shortly before he died, knowing himself to be seriously ill, he had desired to return to the scenes of his childhood and he had come back to the home of his aged and widowed mother. The dilemma faced by the local Christians when he died was a very real one. No one else would dispose of the body; but if they did so, how was it consistent with the fact that the man had been thrust out of the community? Unwilling to face the alternatives, they wished me to do so. My advice to the catechist was that he was to carry out the wishes of the majority of the members of the church in the place. Later I learnt that they had decided to make the widowed mother pay a fine of five rupees, a considerable sum for her, and in return they agreed to bury the corpse without holding any prayers over the grave. Half the money was paid to those who dug the grave, and the balance was deposited in the "poor fund" of the local church.

The danger of a cleavage between the leadership and the rank and file can be seen also in the attitude of many of the former to their own language and culture. They have benefited materially

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794 807 191 179 178 from their aptitude at school in mastering the subject matter of their Bengali education and they are all too conscious of the early handicaps arising from bilingualism. They entertain a very natural ambition to give their children a better chance than they themselves have enjoyed, and so a number of them have banished the use of Santali from their homes. This is done not only to give their children a start in school, but also because they feel that if their children learn Santali first they will speak Bengali with a Santal, and therefore an uncultured, accent, on account of which they themselves have experienced the shafts of derision. In any case it is probable that owing to their education they find the Bengali language more adequate for the expression of many of their own needs. They are therefore predisposed to turn their backs on Santal culture and adopt modes of behaviour that are alien to the Santal village. The moral standards of individualism and those of a society where the individual counts for little have clashed in their lives and have not yet resulted in an equilibrium.

794 781 554 Nevertheless, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the Christian Church is making some contributions of real significance to the whole community through the new educated leadership which is also responsible for elements of real value in the life of the Christian Church itself. Among the leaders, as also among the rank and file, there is much genuine religious experience and sincere piety that issue in unselfish service to the village as a whole and to the Christian Church in particular. Chuneram Hembrom, a pensioner of the mission, wrote: "Now because of my age they have pensioned me on seven rupees a month. However, God and Jesus the Saviour of men have not deserted me. The spirit of my mind is cool (i.e., it is at peace). I believe that if we unite body and mind in prayer and ask anything in the name of Jesus it will be granted to us. All of us pray to Jesus Christ. Although my wife can neither read nor write, she prays with knowledge every evening and we are content. By our deeds and by our words we bring pain to God, but through Jesus we ask for forgiveness."[1] Many members of the second generation of Christians are active in a hundred local situations, serving their fellows. Some are revered by many generations of school children and are themselves proud of those whom they have helped to go farther on the road of learning than they themselves have travelled. In time of famine and sickness they spend themselves on behalf of their fellows and are trusted by all.

794 Corporate life in the Christian community finds expression in

[1] From a manuscript in my possession.

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a new symbolism and is fostered by a new ritual. The central act of corporate worship on Sunday, springing from a tradition that is more sabbatarian than sacramental, has taken hold of the imagination of the people. Babulal describes the visit of a missionary to Barikul on a Sunday: "At about two in the afternoon the bell sounded for the Christians to praise the Holy Name of the Heavenly Father. Everyone knew that our *mañjhi haṛam*[1] had arrived, or the bell would not have been sounded so early. A second bell followed according to custom. All the Christians gathered, and first as we entered the church we prayed in our minds for strength. The *mañjhi haṛam* read out a song and we all sang it together, after which we all knelt and followed his prayer. When there was something in the prayer with which we heartily agreed we said to ourselves: 'Heavenly Father, let it be!' Then we heard the Sixteenth Chapter of St. Mark's Gospel, and from it he spoke many words for strengthening us and gave us good advice. At the end we sang again and after prayers we came out of the church. As we stood on the verandah we greeted the *mañjhi haṛam* and had sweet conversation together. He asked some of us elders a few questions: 'What is the state of mind of the villagers? Why do they not accept Jesus?' He also asked: 'What is the state of the evening daily prayers in the village and how goes the Class Meeting?'[2] We told him: 'The people of the village are only drunkards, and as to that we are also at fault, for we have had one or two drunkards amongst us and we have not tried to work hard for Jesus Christ. As for the second thing, evening prayers are being held in a different house each evening; it is not possible for us all to gather every evening. The Class Meeting is going very well. We are hoping that by its influence we shall be able to get rid of drinking and other evils amongst us. We have made a rule amongst ourselves about drinking. If anyone is found drinking we shall fine him five *siki*.[3] If it happens three times we shall fine him five rupees. Then if he continues we shall bring it to the notice of our *maraṅ nacke* or *mañjhi haṛam* and drive him out from us. We shall not sit with him no matter what he wishes to do, whether at a birth or *chaṭiar* or marriage; nor shall we go to his house. Then we shall be

[1] Babulal uses a curious phrase here for the missionary. It is not in general use. Literally the "old headman" or "chief headman", the term is in general use to designate the original founder of a village. A missionary is generally *padri Sahib*.

[2] This Methodist term occurs in the manuscript. It is familiar to the community.

[3] A *siki* is equivalent to four annas.

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797 able to drive out all evil from amongst us and the work of Jesus Christ will progress.' "

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533 In some parts of the Santal Church many of the hymns sung are translations of ancient and other Christian hymns set to western melodies, but in this area nearly all the hymns are the product of the community. In the hymnbook now in use[1] there are one hundred and forty hymns, of which one hundred and twenty are original compositions of Christians in the area. Half the remaining twenty have been borrowed from Santali hymnbooks published elsewhere. All these have been set to folk-melodies, and the book is a best seller at markets and fairs through the whole area. The words show clearly the stamp of their environment and at the same time they are full of biblical
[539] imagery:

Come, come, merciful Jesus,
Come, come, to the house of my mind.
Seeing Thee, in a moment of time
My mind breaks up.

Life Thou art and Truth,
And the True Way art Thou,
Help of the helpless, Jesus,
That is why I seek Thee.

Among sweet-scented flowers Thou the parrot,
A dark jewel art Thou.
In whose mind Thou art the jewel
He alone is truly rich.[2]

In one hymn Jesus the teacher of the Truth is likened to the bright evening star in the night sky. In another they sing:

[539] The star of morning has risen and shines,
The gentle morning breeze is blowing,
The day of salvation has come to us.[3]

Some of the hymns owe not a little to the fact that the writer knew hymns in Bengali or more remotely in English, but the sentiments have been popularized by being set to Santal
[539] melodies. One of the most popular of the evening hymns, set to a haunting melody belonging to the *herhet'* or weeding songs, is

[1] *Dhorom Seren Puthi*, 3rd ed., Sarenga, 1936.
[2] See Appendix B, No. 28. [3] See Appendix B, No. 29.

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little more than a translation of the familiar words of "Abide with me":

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The sun has set, O Jesus stay with me,
I have no other friends but Thee.

Life does not stand, and swiftly it is gone,
On earth I nothing find but Thee alone.

Nor hardship nor trouble nor death shall I fear
If Thou grantest mercy and stayest near.

Thy Cross I hold, forgive my sins I pray,
Give heavenly light, be with me night and day.[1]

Whether the coming of Jesus is thought of as the shining of a bright star in the sky of a dark night or as the light that heralds the approach of dawn and a glorious day, in all circumstances the devotion of the Santal Christian Church is centred in Him as the Light of the world.

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The festivals of the Christian year are becoming landmarks in the lives of the people. This is particularly true of the Christmas season. The communal feast when all the Christians eat together on Christmas Day is a natural expression of the spirit that animates the day. Various activities are arranged for the children. The type of celebration followed in the area has been created by the tradition established over a number of years in the central mission station. A Christmas tree is erected in the church and a party held there for the children on Christmas Eve. Originally, the gifts on the tree came from England, but for several years they have been found largely by the local community. Father Christmas is now a familiar figure. The young men of the church remain awake all night and set out soon after midnight to sing carols outside the homes of the members of the community, leaving off when they have completed the round soon after daybreak. A large proportion of full members attend a service of Holy Communion in the morning, but the main body of worshippers gather in large numbers for a service beginning soon after noon. All are dressed in new clothes, and the body of the church, which is bare of furnishings except for sitting-mats, is well filled for a service in which singing predominates. At the close of the service the youths begin a dance in the church, and going out through a side door they dance round the building. On

[1] See Appendix B, No. 30.

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this occasion they make use of *sarpa*, and the Christmas songs that they sing are set to *Sohrae* tunes, as Christmas falls into the harvest season. During the afternoon of Christmas Day sports are held. These attract large numbers of spectators, and the final item in the sports, an archery contest, has become established as one of the events of the countryside. The interest and enthusiasm of spectators and competitors, who gather year after year to display their skill, is out of all proportion to the value of the prize that is offered. When the sports end the people disperse, the Christians to feast in their own homes.

Good Friday is observed with great solemnity, and the majority of the adults fast until after they have attended church. The services are very well attended, and on the initiative of the people themselves new forms of celebration are frequently being introduced. In most of the local churches the three-hour service has established itself in the customs of the people. On Good Friday in 1946 at the village of Barikul the people decided to follow the service by a silent procession through the village street. They filed behind a "standard bearer" who carried a rude cross fashioned from two *sarjom* saplings. At Easter it is customary for the dawn to be greeted by bands of young men singing in the village and also at the local Christian burial ground. The day is also characterized by large and enthusiastic gatherings of worshippers. Little has been done in this area to "baptize" the magico-religious practices connected with agriculture, and although Harvest Festivals are celebrated by the bringing of thank-offerings to church and the decoration of the church buildings, they have not become times of community rejoicing and remembrance as have the historic occasions associated with the Incarnation, Death and Resurrection of the Saviour.

In the customs that surround life's crises one sees the blending of old and new concepts and symbols. Pregnancy taboos are widely observed, and steps have to be taken by Christians to remove the uncleanness resulting from birth. The practice of "churching" women was not introduced to the people at the beginning and it has never been put in the forefront, but the Christians carry out the bathing and naming and the feasting of neighbours. In this they are joined in many cases by non-Christian villagers, though no two Christian occasions are alike in this respect. In some places most of the villagers gather, in other places all the women come, while at other villages only Christians collect. Something depends on the strength and persistence

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of ties that have been maintained with kinsfolk and something on the general regard for the individuals concerned. The same variety is found in the degree to which precautions against *bhut* and other unseen adversaries are observed, but a new element has been introduced in the prayer offered on the occasion by the local leader of the church. Infant Baptism follows usually during some part of the first year of the child's life. Very young children are withheld from Baptism as a rule, and this may be partly due to a feeling that the ceremony is in some way dangerous to the new-born infant. Among some people it is sought in connection with the time when the child first begins to eat rice; among others it is customary for them to offer their children in Baptism on Christmas Day. When the child is taken to church to be baptized both the parents and the child are dressed in new clothes and relatives and neighbours are invited to a feast in the home of the child.

Many pre-Christian elements remain in the preparations made for marriage. The choice of marriage partners is still largely in the hands of the parents of the bridegroom and the bride. The services of a go-between are engaged and ceremonial visits take place during the course of which the bride price is negotiated and paid. During the early years of the mission the custom of bride price was actively discouraged, but a fuller understanding of its importance has led to a tacit acceptance by the authorities; in the meanwhile it is now often referred to by Christians under the name of "mutual help". The rise of economic standards in the Christian community is reflected in a tendency among parents of Christian girls to demand a bride price higher than the rate current in the non-Christian community. From time to time Christians have met to discuss means by which the bride price may be fixed and excessive demands restricted. On the eve of the religious ceremony which is central in Christian marriage the traditional anointing is observed in the homes of both parties to the marriage and many of the traditional songs are sung. A Christian explained these ceremonies by saying that they are regarded as a way of saying to the bride and bridegroom: "From now you are separate." It cannot be denied that they are an effective way of emphasizing this truth.

The marriage ceremony, which has to be conducted in accordance with the provisions of the Indian Christian Marriage Act, is held either in a church building or, where there is no church, in the courtyard of the bride's home. The last occasion on which I was present at a Santal Christian marriage was in February 1945.

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The service took place in the church at Barikul; the month is significant, for Christians observe the same times and seasons as others. The bride, whose home was in the village, had been away to boarding school and was sixteen years old. For her wedding she was dressed in a red *sapi*, and her head and face were covered by one end of the garment. The bridegroom was a village schoolmaster whose home was in a village some eight miles distant. He too was dressed in "respectable", i.e. Bengali, fashion, with a silk cloth thrown over his right shoulder. Many non-Christian women and girls crowded into the church with the Christians to watch, though non-Christian men stayed outside and peered through the windows. The service is according to the Order in the Book of Common Prayer, and the bridegroom presents the bride with a ring. The fact that the bride was holding in her left hand an iron *janti*, or betel nut cracker, led to somewhat complicated shufflings when the ring was being placed in position. The mutual vows involve the repetition of the personal names of the bride by the bridegroom, and *vice versa*, a definite departure from tribal custom. When the Benediction had been pronounced a maternal aunt of the bride tied one end of the latter's *sapi* to the end of the bridegroom's silk cloth, and this was followed by the signing of the register, an act that is always regarded with great interest by the non-Christians who observe it. While the register was being signed the men and women in the church sang alternate verses of a marriage song. Before the main party had left the building the rest of the congregation went out and the door was locked. No one else was allowed to leave the building until the bridegroom had promised to pay a fee to the old women whose duty it was to sweep the church, a building of mud walls with a thatched roof that was used also as a day school. The bride, the bridegroom and the officiating minister were garlanded.

At the bride's home after the ceremony we saw some of the mock garlands which the *lumti*, or bridesmaids, had made for the bridegroom and his father. They were of plaited coco-nut fibre decorated with tamarind fruits and pieces of the hard outer shell of the *sinjo* fruit. The groom and bride arrived back at the home still tied together; they were being led by the wife of the local "catechist", who held the bridegroom's right hand in her left, and the small procession was completed by an unmarried girl walking close behind the couple, holding an umbrella over their heads. The knot in their clothing was now untied and they were both carried into the house on the hip of a stalwart married woman to partake of their first meal together, the only time

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when they would sit and eat together. The feast took some time to prepare; the bride's relations—her parents were dead and she was married from the home of a paternal aunt, a blind widow—had provided a goat, but as they were in poor circumstances the Christian villagers had contributed the rice from their homes. While the guests waited for the food there was a good deal of singing, the songs being both traditional and Christian. Here are some examples noted at the time:

Two bows and six arrow shafts I kept in store.
The arrowheads have been sent ahead to *Radha*;[1]
The money also has been sent ahead to *Radha*.[2]

You who should have come yesterday at noon,
Why, sons, did you arrive in the evening?

Three headmen from three villages
Wrangled over the marriage booth;
They did not want to let go the vermilion giving.[3]

The daughter bids farewell and goes;
The house is forlorn, father, the house is forlorn.
The rice in the straw bundle has been pushed out;
Its wooden platform is forlorn, father, its wooden platform is forlorn.[4]

The following song struck a Christian note:

My life (Jesus) and your life,
Two lives (Jesus) are bound together;
Like the *alak* creeper and the *bandi*[5] creeper,
Like the spider web in the palmyra tree,
Two lives (Jesus) are bound together.[6]

On this occasion I was unable to remain to witness the final farewell and homegoing, but these follow closely the traditional Santal way.

In the death ceremonies there is little trace of pre-Christian modes of thought. This is not surprising in view of the fact that Christian teaching not only gives a new significance to the individual but also has something definite to say about the destiny of the human soul after death. The difference is emphasized for

[1] The name of the bridegroom's village.
[2] See Appendix B, No. 32.
[3] Two forest creepers.
[4] See Appendix B, No. 31.
[5] See Appendix B, No. 33.
[6] See Appendix B, No. 34.

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the Santal Christian by the fact that the Christian custom—so far as he is aware—is burial. When a death has occurred the interment follows as soon as possible, but not before the corpse has been anointed with oil and turmeric. For this service the Christians are dependent upon each other; non-Christians keep themselves strictly away from the house of death. The grave is always dug lengthwise from east to west and the head of the corpse is placed towards the west. Whenever possible the body is draped in a new cloth, but in any case the clothes worn at the time of death are also buried. Coffins are a sign of affluence; usually the body is laid on a bed of leaves at the bottom of the grave and covered gently with leaves and sticks before the earth is filled in. Small treasures are laid in the grave, personal possessions of the deceased; and it is not uncommon to bury a New Testament or a Bible with the body. The subsequent mourning and funeral ceremonies of the non-Christian are altogether absent; in their place we find that on the day after the funeral, which is also usually the day after the death has taken place, the Christians gather at the bereaved home, where they sing and pray together and hear the Scriptures read. The dead person is praised and the living are comforted; and no passages are more used at these occasions than the familiar words of the Twenty-third Psalm and the Fourteenth Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. They share the Christian hope and in expressing it they are giving a new content to the word *rąską* that is so often on the lips of the Santal, for they speak of *jaejug rąską*, eternal joy.